



FROM A RENDEZVOUS with a killer in a blackout the D. A.'s secretary, Miss Miller (portrayed by Vicki Vola, above), brings back evidence that convicts him



MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY, portrayed on the air by Jay Jostyn (above), plays a hunch when he sees a connection between the case of the snatched bridegroom and the elusive crook who disposed of every witness who could possibly have testified against him



BOSS VERONA, played by Walter Vaughn (above), got away with murder, kidnaping and extortion for a while, but his egotism finally trapped him

The Case of the Last Witness

FEATURING MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY

THE CAST

The Character	The Player
Mr. District Attorney.....	Jay Jostyn
Harrington.....	Len Doyle
Miss Miller.....	Vicki Vola
Verona.....	Walter Vaughn

THE last note of the organ died away in the hushed chapel. Pretty Mary Hastings and her nervous groom, Warren Wheatley, stood before the altar waiting for their marriage ceremony to begin. The gaunt-faced minister opened his prayer-book. His voice was deep and resonant, and his words were heard distinctly even at the back of the little chapel.

"Into this holy estate, these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace—"

Then, like a false note in a symphony, came a harsh voice from the rear of the room.

"I'd like to speak, Mister." The heads of the wedding guests turned and the minister's mouth dropped open. The bride looked as though she were about to faint. Up the aisle walked a hard-faced, brutish-looking man. He was carrying a revolver.

"I got a good reason why he shouldn't be hitched," said the hard-faced man, patting his gun. "It's right here. Stand where ya are—all of ya—"

"Now, see here," the minister said, frowning.

"Pipe down, Preacher," the stranger rasped. "I'm bustin' up your party. This guy's comin' with me!"

The hard-faced man walked calmly up the steps of the altar, grabbed Wheatley by the sleeve and pushed the revolver against the small of his back.

"Come on, Mister Bridegroom," said the stranger. "We're blowin' out the back way . . . and fast!"

An Elusive Killer Disposes of All of the Witnesses But the One He Didn't Even Know Existed



That's how Harrington, the District Attorney's assistant, told the story. The D. A. listened carefully, his keen eyes narrowing in concentration as he paced back and forth before his desk.

The D. A. swung toward Harrington. "It seems odd," he said, "that no one tried to stop him."

"Well," Harrington said, spreading his hands, "there were only about a dozen people in the chapel, and it all went so fast I guess they were too dazed to do anything."

"How about the get-away car?"



"That's already in the works, Chief. After Wheatley and his snatcher left, the best man rushed to the door and knocked off the license number of the car the kidnaper was driving away. I sent out a general alarm on it just before I came in."

"Good," the D. A. said. "Did anybody advance a motive?"

"No. I couldn't even talk to the bride. She was too hysterical."

At that moment, Miss Miller, the D. A.'s attractive secretary, came into the office. She was excited.

"The state police just called," she said. "They have several reports on that car Harrington wanted traced. The last one came from up near Centerville. The car was seen going along a dirt road heading for the hills—"

"That means they're still in the county, Chief," Harrington interrupted. "How long ago was the car seen?"

The D. A. asked Miss Miller.

"It's about a half an hour now." The D. A. grabbed his hat, told Miss Miller he and Harrington would check with her on the telephone if anything turned up, then strode toward the outer office. Harrington had difficulty in keeping up with his boss . . .

Harrington pushed the car hard on the drive up to Centerville. Once they stopped to confer with a squad of state police, then resumed the reckless ride up into the hills. Darkness had fallen and the strong headlights made the trees ahead look like ghosts. Once again they talked to two state police officers who were patrolling the lonely dirt road which wound out of sight in the darkness. The officers told them they had seen nothing, that others were beating the woods and hills for a possible hideout.

Some minutes later, the D. A. touched Harrington's arm and pointed to a small drive off the dirt road. Harrington jammed on the brakes and brought the car to a screeching halt. Both men exchanged glances in the subdued light of the car's front seat as they heard a distant roll of thunder. It was going to storm.

"Let me have one of those flashlights, Harrington," said the D. A. "I think we'll find a house up this road."

The two men crawled out of the car and started walking cautiously up the twisting little side road that was hardly more than two ruts in the sod. They talked in hushed voices. Harrington patted the side of his pocket. His automatic was ready. The D. A. switched on the flashlight, and ahead, through

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the trees, the two men saw the vague outline of an unpainted mountain shack.

"No lights there," said Harrington. "Maybe it's empty."

"It may be now," the D. A. agreed, "but look here."

He turned the light down on the road where, cut deeply in the soft ruts, were fresh tire-tracks.

"A car's come and gone here recently," the D. A. said, "I guess we'd better look around."

He switched off the light and the two men stumbled through the darkness into the clearing around the ancient shack. Lightning crackled across the sky to the west and was followed instantly by a deafening clap of thunder. The storm was about to break any minute.

Near one of the fallen-down out-buildings, the D. A. switched on the light again, and almost jumped backward in surprise at what he saw.

"Blood," he said under his breath. "Harrington, the ground's all covered with blood."

While Harrington looked over the D. A.'s shoulder, his chief swung the flashlight in a wide arc.

"Do you see what I see?" the D. A. asked.

"Yeah," Harrington said in a hushed voice. "A bunch of chickens—and all dead."

The two men stepped closer and counted the chickens. There were twelve of them.

"Their heads have all been cut off," Harrington said. "Not cut off, Harrington. They appear to have been shot off!" The D. A. paused. "Yes, Harrington, shot off. And I know of only one person who indulges in a pastime like that—a gentleman named Boss Verona."

"Hey," cried Harrington almost in relief, "that's right. He uses 'em for target practise according to that guy Erwin's trial testimony. Say, Chief, maybe this is his hideout. Maybe Verona's the one who snatched the guy from the church."

"It's beginning to look that way," said the D. A. turning off the flashlight. "Come on, we'll look through the shack. I don't think we'll find anyone here now, but we can't take chances."

As the D. A. predicted, the shack was deserted. But he and Harrington found evidence that it had been occupied only recently. In the kitchen were dirty dishes, empty tin cans and scores of cigarette butts. Two beds in another room had been slept in.

"Verona had a companion," the D. A. said softly.

"I wonder why they brought the guy all the way out here if they weren't going to stay," Harrington said, looking under a table in a far corner of the shack.

The D. A. paused in the center of the small room. For a time he said nothing. He was deep in thought. Finally, he snapped his fingers.

"I think I know the answer," he cried. "Verona has been hiding out these past two years to avoid facing trial for that murder indictment we

have on him."

"Yeah," said Harrington. "I remember. We think he killed Lefty Lynch and one other guy—but try and prove it."

"Right. In those two years, several of the witnesses that could testify against him have either died or disappeared."

"Sure, but—"

"In fact," said the D. A. interrupting, "nearly everyone who might have testified against Verona is now dead and most of them died under pretty suspicious circumstances. Looks like he was purposely wiping out his own gang."

"So none of 'em could testify against him, huh?"

"Yes, but we have two witnesses left—only two—and one of them, Mike Erwin, is in the death-house at the state penitentiary—"

"Gosh, Chief, do you remember something? Erwin's gonna burn tonight."

"I know," the D. A. said quietly. "And I'd rather let him die. The man was certainly guilty. Besides, we don't need him. The other witness is a man named David Norton." The D. A. suddenly became tense. "Why didn't

I think of that before?" he suddenly asked.

"Think of what, Chief?"

"Why didn't I remember that Norton was going to be married today and in the same chapel as young Wheatley, Harrington, Verona grabbed the wrong guy!"

"But," Harrington said, "wouldn't Verona know Norton when he saw him?"

"Of course," the D. A. agreed, "but he must have sent his confederate in to do the job and the confederate made the mistake. Quick, Harrington, that telephone on the wall. We've got to reach Miss Miller—we've got to warn Norton at once. We've got to tell Miss Miller to call Norton's home and find out where he's going on his honeymoon."

The storm broke in all its fury as Harrington twisted the crank on the old-style wall telephone. But Harrington and the D. A. were too late. The D. A.'s secretary had just received word that Norton had been shot at the railroad station an hour before!

"What'll I tell Miss Miller," Harrington asked.

"Tell her to call the governor," snapped the D. A. "I've got to make a deal with Erwin. Tell Miss Miller to have the governor get a stay of execution. I'll explain later."

Harrington turned back to the phone, but just as he began talking, a stroke of lightning, like a whiplash, cracked through the woods. Sparks leaped from the telephone and Harrington leaped backwards. When he tried to use the instrument again, he found it

dead. The electric storm had knocked it out.

There was no time to lose. The two men had to reach another phone and every minute was at a premium. Harrington kept his foot on the floor-board all the way down the mountain-side. The car slowed dangerously around the slippery curves and rain beat in sheets against the windshield. Harrington drove with reckless skill, but more than once death was only a matter of inches as the heavy machine skidded on the hairpin turns. Luck was against them. The storm knocked out every telephone in the area!

"We'll have to drive to the prison," said the D. A., and again they were off on the mad ride through the night.

But they arrived too late—just seconds after Erwin breathed his last in the electric chair. The last witness against Verona was dead and apparently his slate was clean—legally clean. The D. A. knew he couldn't touch the killer.

There was only one ray of hope. It developed the following day when Harrington came excitedly into the D. A.'s office.

"I've been talking to Mrs. Wheatley," he cried.

"Mrs. Wheatley? Who's that?" the D. A. asked.

"The bride of that guy who was snatched. Don't you remember? Well, she's got a kidnap note signed by her husband. Here it is."

The D. A. snatched the envelope from Harrington's hand and, using care to preserve possible finger-prints on the document, he spread it on his desk. It read:

"Dear Mary: I was requested to write this note to you by the man who is my captor. He wants me to tell you that I will be held until ten thousand dollars is paid for my release. I personally do not sanction this. However, he says that if you are interested, you should insert an advertisement in tonight's paper to that effect. He will contact you again after this ad appears. I am in good health. Don't worry about me. Love, Warren."

"How do you like that guy Verona?" Harrington said. "He not only wipes his slate clean but he's gonna make some dough into the bargain."

"His slate was clean, Harrington," the D. A. said grimly, "but he seems to have gotten himself a new piece of chalk." The D. A. looked up. "Miss Miller, I want you to put that ad in the paper at once!"

The reply came the next day, but it looked like Verona was going to play things safe.

"Dearest Mary," the new note read. "I understand that you have inserted the advertisement as requested. I wish you hadn't done it. I don't feel that you should be paying that money for me. However, I am being forced to give you the following instructions: There is to be a city-wide test blackout tomorrow night at 10:30. Just before that hour you are to go to the four hundred block in West Street. Midway in that block there is a group of apartment houses. You are to walk up and down in front of those buildings until the blackout. Then you will be given a signal to enter one of them—"

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"He don't wanna be seen," commented Harrington. "And Wheatley's only seen Verona's confederate. The Boss is sure being careful."

The D. A. continued to read the note. "You are warned to come alone, bring the money, and wear a corsage of violets for identification. If the police interfere, my life will be forfeited. Confirm this rendezvous by inserting another advertisement. All my love, Warren."

"Send the girl there, Chief," said Harrington. "I'll move in with a squad and grab him quick."

"No, Harrington, we can't do that. Don't forget the blackout. You'd never find Verona. Besides that, Miss Miller tells me that the girl is in no condition to keep the appointment."

"How about me going there, Chief?" Miss Miller volunteered. The D. A. looked at his secretary with appreciation.

"It's too dangerous," he said. "You'd be risking your life. Remember, Verona is a killer. He thinks he's safe and wants to stay that way."

"I can handle it, Chief. I know I can."

"Well," the D. A. said reluctantly after some thought, "I suppose it's the only way. You'll have to go through with it just as it was laid out in the note. The ransom money will be paid and we'll make things easy for Mr. Verona. But we'll set a trap. I've got a plan and I think it'll work—it'll work if Mr. Verona's ego is what I think it is."

The following night Miss Miller, wearing a corsage of violets, walked slowly up and down the four hundred block on West Street. Although she looked, she saw nothing suspicious. The street, with its tall apartment buildings, seemed perfectly normal except for the air of excitement due to the coming blackout. Air-raid wardens, with white bands on their sleeves, and police patrolled the block. Everything was in readiness when the dismal whine of the sirens started. Seconds later the street was plunged in stygian darkness, more blinding because of its contrast with the brilliant lighting of a few moments before.

MISS MILLER continued to walk slowly down the street. Suddenly she felt the presence of someone near her on the sidewalk. She heard breathing in the darkness and, with a thrill of excitement, she knew she was walking with the killer.

"All right, sister," came a low, hoarse voice out of the night. "Step in this doorway."

Miss Miller felt a hand on her arm and went willingly with her guide.

"Did ya bring the dough?" he whispered.

"Yes," she replied. "It's in my purse."

Carefully she followed the D. A.'s instructions. There was a slight pause, then a click, like the sound of purse snaps being opened. She pushed the roll of bills out into the darkness and felt the searching fingers of the stranger in the dark. He took the money.

"Your boy friend'll be released," the voice whispered, "as soon as I get away clean."

Miss Miller couldn't tell exactly when

he left, but she knew again when she was alone. She stood there in the doorway of the apartment building, waiting in trembling excitement for the lights to come back on. Had the D. A.'s plan worked? Had they trapped Boss Verona?

The next day told the story, but it did not start auspiciously. The police called the D. A. and told him that a crook by the name of Monk Mullins, whom the released Wheatley identified as his kidnaper, had been killed up at the mountain shack near Centerville the night before. Verona again had slain the only man who could testify against him.

That's why the D. A. was not surprised when Boss Verona swaggered into his office about noon. His ego, as the D. A. had predicted, had brought him in to boast.

"I understand that you been lookin' for me," Verona said with a sneer. "Been lookin' almost two years now, ain't it? Well, I'm a little late, but anyhow I made it."

"I appreciate your coming," the D. A. said softly. "My secretary has some interesting pictures to show you."

The D. A. pushed the button on his desk and Miss Miller came into the room. She winked at the D. A. as she handed him an envelope and stood back to wait developments.

The D. A. casually opened the envelope and spread the pictures on his desk.

"Don't tell me you've got some etchings, Mr. D. A.?" said Verona sarcastically.

"No," the D. A. replied grimly. "These are pictures of you—excellent ones—taken in that hallway just as

you received the ransom money. Take a look at them, Verona; they link you with Monk Mullins and the kidnapping. It looks like we've got you for murder as well as for kidnapping."

"What is this?" Verona roared. "What are you tryin' to pull on me? How could you frame pictures of me this way there in the dark? The thing's impossible. It's just a trick."

The D. A. grinned. "You should keep abreast of science, Verona," he said. "Suppose I let Miss Miller tell you how it was done."

"Thank you, Chief," said the girl. "But the credit belongs to you. The idea was yours. I merely carried it out. You see, when I opened my pocketbook to give Verona the money, I also took out a tiny camera that I carried which was equipped with special film and an infra-red flashbulb. These bulbs don't give off any visible light and yet they enable a person to take a perfect picture in the dark. So I got a picture of Verona with the ransom bills."

"And," added Harrington, "if it hadn't been for those pictures, Miss Miller, we never would have had a thing on Verona."

"But we have them," said the D. A. looking sternly at the white-faced crook, "and, Verona, they are your death warrant. You're as good as in the chair right now."

This thrilling story was adapted from a dramatization on the famous radio show "Mr. District Attorney," written by Jerry Devine. "Mr. District Attorney" may be heard over NBC Wednesdays at 9:30 p.m. EWT, 8:30 CWT, 7:30 MWT, 6:30 PWT, under the sponsorship of Bristol-Myers Co. for Vitalis and Ingram's Shaving Cream.